

Olive Roever
Albert Hill Middle School

Imagine growing up in a time where every day, your rights were challenged and you were constantly being discriminated against. Seems like a tough situation to find hope in right? Well, against all odds John Lewis always found ways to fight back against unfair laws while inspiring people to speak up about their own experiences. John Lewis will always be remembered for the actions he took against Jim Crow laws and how he continued to fight for African American rights till his last breath.

Troy Alabama, 1940. The beginning of a life that would change millions more throughout history. Growing up during segregation and the Jim Crow Laws, John Lewis didn't have it easy. Being the son of a sharecropper and going to a segregated school probably left Lewis wondering why all of this was happening. Why was he being treated differently than a white student? What was the purpose of all these Jim Crow laws and why did they restrict his right to voice his opinions? With these questions in mind and inspiring figures like Rosa Parks and MLK, John Lewis was motivated to take steps into a brighter future for the black community. He specifically did this by organizing marches, participating in sit-ins, and boycotting events he felt were unnecessary. Not very surprisingly, he was also one of the original 13 "freedom riders," who confronted segregation on interstate buses. On March 7, 1965 Lewis took part in a march to defend African American voting rights. This march suddenly went south when state troopers beat hundreds of people who were protesting. Now, this day is known as "Bloody Sunday."

In 1986 Lewis was elected to Congress where he continued his activism work and accomplished numerous victories. This included marching along with one of his idols Martin Luther King Jr. and attending the inauguration of President Barack Obama. Although he was elected to Congress, this didn't stop him from continuing to protest. In 2016 a bill wasn't passed in Congress which led him to protest on the House floor. Organizing a sit-in was a positive and peaceful way to show his opinions about the matter. He served in Congress for over 30 years, contributing deeply to the understanding of people's rights. In 2019 Lewis was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and sadly passed away on July 17, 2020. If I've learned anything from my research about John Lewis, it's that he was determined and could find hope in any situation. 60 years of fighting and one main goal in mind, fight for the rights of people in need.